

Message Text

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ACTION SPTA-02

INFO OCT-01 ARA-11 ISO-00 DODE-00 CIAE-00 INR-10

NSAE-00 L-03 SS-15 SP-02 PM-05 NSCE-00 SSO-00

INRE-00 ICAE-00 /049 W

-----023634 141609Z /64

O 141555Z SEP 78

FM AMEMBASSY PANAMA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8888

INFO PANCANAL

USSOUTHCOM

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PEPR, PQ, PN, US

SUBJ: CONSULTATIONS ON TREATY IMPLEMENTATION:
COMMUNITY RELATIONS

REF: STATE 227085

1. WE HAVE DISCUSSED THIS QUESTION WITH PANAMANIAN NATIONAL COMMISSION EXECUTIVE SECRETARIAT OFFICIALS. THEY ARE ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT THE POSSIBILITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT IN THE COMMUNITY RELATIONS AREA, AND CONSIDER IT AN APPROPRIATE SUBJECT FOR DISCUSSION.

2. IT SEEMS TO US THAT THERE ARE TWO GENERAL AREAS IN WHICH ACTION BY BOTH SIDES IS NEEDED. FIRST, AN ADEQUATE PUBLIC RELATIONS PROGRAM IS NEEDED TO EXPLAIN TO THE PANAMANIAN AND CANAL ZONE PUBLIC WHAT IS BEING DONE IN TREATY PLANNING AND TO CLARIFY MISUNDERSTANDINGS AS THEY ARISE. (FOR EXAMPLE, THERE HAVE BEEN CHARGES OF ABANDONMENT, DESTRUCTION OR REMOVAL OF PROPERTY WHICH IS TO BE RELINQUISHED TO PANAMA UNDER THE TREATY. THE APPROPRIATE OFFICES OF PANCANAL, SOUTHCOM AND THE EMBASSY WILL BE SEEKING TO LIMIT DAMAGE ON THIS TYPE OF CHARGE.)

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3. SECOND, WE STRONGLY FAVOR AN EXPANDED COMMUNITY RELATIONS PROGRAM, ALONG THE LINES SUGGESTED IN REFTTEL. A GREAT DEAL OF INTERCHANGE ALREADY TAKES PLACE. THERE IS A SIGNIFICANT AMOUNT OF INTERCHANGE AMONG HOBBY CLUBS, CIVIC AND PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS, SPORTS TEAMS, CULTURAL PROGRAMS, ETC. THIS CONTACT, WHICH NEVER

STOPPED, HAS DEFINITELY EXPANDED IN RECENT MONTHS -- IN TERMS OF PERSONAL SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS AND MORE INSTITUTIONAL CONTACTS. MANY OF THESE ACTIVITIES SHOULD BE ENCOURAGED AND EXPANDED. IN ADDITION, NEW INITIATIVES ENCOURAGING PEOPLE-TO-PEOPLE CONTACT SHOULD BE TAKEN. A NUMBER OF EVENTS WHICH GAVE OPPORTUNITIES FOR FRIENDLY CONTACT WERE ABANDONED IN THE TENSE YEARS PRECEDING THE TREATY SIGNING; MANY SHOULD PROBABLY BE REINITIATED. THESE INCLUDE ZONE PARTICIPATION IN REGIONAL FAIRS, GREATER PARTICIPATION BY THE U. S. AND PANAMA IN PATRIOTIC CEREMONIES AND FESTIVALS, ETC.

4. ICA HAS IN ITS COUNTRY PLAN A GOAL OF ENCOURAGING COOPERATION AND UNDERSTANDING AMONG PANAMANIAN, U.S. CITIZENS IN PANAMA AND ZONE RESIDENTS. ICA WILL BE INCLUDING IT ITS PROGRAM PROJECTS AIMED AT FULFILLING THAT GOAL.

5. WHILE WE STRONGLY SUPPORT AN INCREASED EXCHANGE ALONG THESE LINES, THERE ARE SOME CAVEATS. FIRST, WE SHOULD NOT TRY TO GO TOO FAR TOO FAST. A PHONY GINNED-UP PR JOB WILL NOT BE EFFECTIVE. TO THE EXTENT POSSIBLE, IT MUST REFLECT A GENUINE DESIRE TO PROMOTE UNDERSTANDING. CONSIDERING RECENT HISTORY, THERE IS MUCH MORE UNDERLYING GOOD WILL HERE THAN ONE WOULD EXPECT. A GOOD JOB WILL TAKE TIME AND PATIENCE. SECOND, THE GOP AND OUR SIDE AS WELL SHOULD CONCENTRATE HEAVILY ON AVOIDING LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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INCIDENTS WHICH WOULD ALARM ZONE RESIDENTS OR ANGER THE PANAMANIAN. IN THE SHORT RUN AVOIDING THE NEGATIVE IS MORE CRUCIAL THAN PROMOTING THE POSITIVE.

6. WE HAVE DISCUSSED THIS MATTER WITH PANCANAL AND SOUTHCOM OFFICIALS. THOUGH THIS IS NOT A COORDINATED MESSAGE, WE BELIEVE THEY ARE IN AGREEMENT WITH ITS SUBSTANCE. DIKEOS

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